

TOWN OF CHESTER
HOUSING COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes
January 30, 2024

PRESENT: Nancy Pennell, Hugh Quinn, Jason Rasmussen, Joe Karl, Joel Fineberg, Bill Lindsay, Julie Hance, Preston Bristow

VISITORS: Peter Hudkins; Bob Flint; Chris Eggleton

Meeting was held at the Town Hall and via Zoom.

1. ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS:

There were no additions or deletions to the agenda.

2. APPROVE MINUTES:

A motion was made by Bill Lindsay to approve the minutes as drafted. Seconded by Joe Karl. Motion passed.

3. CITIZEN'S COMMENTS:

None.

4. SPRINGFIELD REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION:

Bob Flint discussed the housing sales and costs analysis for the region. Chester sales prices jumped, but Springfield didn't move.

Bob discussed the options out there for funding and regulation relating to housing. One of the challenges with funding is the strings that are attached. SRDC is currently involved in a development in Windsor with the Housing Trust. Funding for this project was about 14 million and had the town applying for many grants. The Vermont Home Improvement funding will be opening back up in April. He further noted that HUD funding will require at least 20% be affordable housing.

SRDC has resisted money that has strings at this point in Springfield because they have enough affordable housing. These strings can include deed restrictions relating to income, some permanent some temporary.

Bob will send Julie some links regarding upcoming programs. The Rental Revolving Loan Fund will be coming out soon. This program is to incentivize developers to build affordable housing for up to 150% of median income and have a nexus to an area employer. Strings are unknown on this.

45 The commission discussed how to do small scale development and how to site these
46 projects. There is an event coming up in March that we will stay tuned for.

47
48 Bob Flint also stated that there is a challenge with development lately is cost of construction
49 compared to assessed value. This may not be an issue in Chester with our housing prices.
50 We will need to find creative ways to fill the gaps.

51
52 The Commission discussed permitting issues with developing in Vermont. These fees are high
53 and very time consuming.

54
55 Joe Karl asked about what controls the affordability, buying or renting. Funding sources are
56 the biggest controls as many are for affordable housing only. Jason stated that there is a
57 vicious loop that developers get stuck in. Bob Flint suggested that the town could determine
58 a site and pre-permit the project.

59
60 Hugh Quinn asked for examples of development of market housing that was successful
61 where the developer becomes whole at the end. Bob noted that Chittenden County and the
62 Upper Valley have examples. Chester's costs are rising where this may be possible here.

63
64 Preston stated that Ken Kottle has 2 buildings in town that house 5 units. He is interested in
65 coming to speak with the Commission and talk about other sites in Chester.

66
67 Joe Karl also questioned how covenants are established so that the properties are managed
68 and taken care of. Preston gave some examples in Woodstock as well as Pleasant Brook in
69 Chester. Typically these properties are turned over to a property management firm so that it
70 doesn't get out of control.

71
72 Jason stated that the other challenge is finding homeowners that can develop their homes.
73 Bob Flint also mentioned the need for senior housing in town to free up other homes. The
74 Maples in Springfield would be a good example for this. Laura Ryan is the housing authority
75 in Springfield and could help coach. Windsor housing trust will be at the next meeting.

76
77 5. UPDATE FROM COMMISSION MEMBERS:

78
79 Nancy Pennell stated that she has no information to bring about the Congo Church. John
80 Bryant is supposed to be the pastor of the church. Nobody seems to be able to get a hold
81 of him. Nancy will check with the corn hole group. She did learn that this Congo Church is
82 an independent unit and not part of a denomination. Nancy will check with Shirley Barrett
83 and David Armstrong about the history and ownership of the church.

84
85 Hugh Quinn and Bill Lindsay talked about the Catholic Church. Hugh reached out to RJ
86 Dourney who is no longer connected with the catholic church. He reached out to Father
87 Larry and he agreed to take the idea to the parish counsel. There will be a follow up in the
88 next month.

89

90 Joe Karl added notes to Peter’s list of properties. There are properties at the end of Marshall
91 Road and the end of Putnam Hill Road. Dick Whitham and his partners have come to talk to
92 Preston about subdividing into 4 lots. He is proposing connecting to water/sewer. It’s in the
93 neighborhood zone. It was also discussed that there is 4.5 acres that Farnsworth just sold.
94 Canal Street well site is 2.5 acres. 494 Main Street has a large lot behind that could be
95 developed. 308 main street is Stewart that owns over to the back of coach road. Coach
96 Road is 26 acres owned by Omar Austin which could be a good development. 449 North
97 Street is Anderson. Flamstead Road is Jan and Dennis Rounds which would be tough
98 development. Gold River Properties could be developed but could be challenging. Button
99 Wood is in current use. The Coach Road apartments could be expanded as well. Joe will try
100 to track down the management firm for Coach Road apartments.

101
102 There is the option of just providing a lot with water/sewer and you bring your own house.
103 This would be a good project to start with perhaps at the Catholic Church or one of the
104 intown lots. Joe asked about management companies. He will research Ludlow companies.

105
106 Joe will also get Preston the phone number for the owners of Cummings Hardware. Preston
107 will talk with Twin Pines Housing Trust to see what they do.

108
109 The Home Share Program could be an option for Chester. There have been 2 ADUs
110 developed in Chester using the VHIP program. This program does provide 50k with a 20%
111 match. This is where the town could help with some of the match funds. We could advertise
112 using an interview with the 2 properties that were successful. These rounds open in April
113 and we should try to be ready. Chris stated that Keys to the Valley will be hosting an ADU
114 expo in the fall.

115
116 Jason and Chris talked about funding sources that were listed and given to the Commission.
117 Many are on hold right now. Chris stated that this will be a working list.

118
119 Julie will look into the Community Partnership for Neighborhood Development. Peter
120 discussed the potential of tearing down the Jeffrey Barn and rebuilding. Joe Karl is willing to
121 take some photos and put on Social Media. Julie will run by the Selectboard on Wednesday.
122 Chris will reach out to the Home Share to come talk on March

123
124 6. NEXT AGENDA

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126 The next meeting is January 23, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. The Housing Trust will be here.

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128 7. ADJOURN

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130 A motion was made by Hugh Quinn to adjourn. Seconded by Joe Karl. The meeting
131 adjourned at 7:33 p.m.

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